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One coal ash bill headed to Governor's desk Bills to protect Georgia's rivers from coal ash await votes

Atlanta, GA--[SB 123](#) by Sen. William Ligon has become the first bill passed by the Georgia General Assembly to deal specifically with coal ash. The legislation passed out of the House of Representatives by a vote of 142 to 15 and was agreed on in the Senate 39 to 9. Two other bills that deal with coal ash, SB 384 and HB 93 await votes in the House and Senate, respectively.

"This is a major step towards closing loopholes that have turned Georgia into a dumping ground for toxic coal ash," said Jennette Gayer, director of Environment Georgia and chair of the Georgia Water Coalition's coal ash committee. "It is also the first bill to pass our legislature that will address the massive threat coal ash poses in Georgia. We urge the Governor to sign this legislation immediately."

SB 123 would close a coal ash loophole that currently encourages out-of-state coal ash dumping in Georgia solid waste landfills. The bill would raise the surcharge that local governments can charge per ton of coal ash from \$1 to \$2.50, in line with the surcharge on regular household garbage.

"Anything to deter the hundreds of trucks hauling coal ash into our community or any other community is desperately needed," said Tammy Purcell, a resident of Banks County, where the R&B landfill has taken in more than 2.7 million tons of coal ash in the last three years, mostly from out of state. "I thank the legislature for moving this legislation and hope they will do more to ensure our communities are protected from this toxin."

Another bill by Sen. Ligon, [SB 384](#), today passed out of the House Committee for Natural Resources and Environment (HNRE). The legislation would prohibit, among other things, coal ash landfills within three miles of the sensitive Satilla River.

"Our coastal blackwater rivers have wide, flat floodplains, and they are no place for a coal ash landfill," said Laura Early, the Satilla Riverkeeper. "We appreciate that the members of the HNRE Committee recognize the importance of these resources to all Georgians and have passed this legislation out of their committee."

The final coal ash bill still moving through the legislature is [HB 93](#) by Rep. Rick Williams. The bill requires community notification when coal ash ponds are drained into rivers and ponds around the state. The bill is in the Senate Rules Committee.

“Georgia Power began sending Plant McDonough’s minimally treated wastewater from coal ash ponds directly into the river without notifying the public,” said Chris Manganiello, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper’s Water Policy Director. “Georgians need to know when coal ash pond water from Plant Wansley, which could contain lead and arsenic, might threaten their fishing trip, a paddle adventure or their drinking water, we urge the legislature to act on this important legislation before adjournment.”

Unfortunately, none of the bills currently still alive in the legislature require liners on any facilities storing coal ash. Liners were specifically requested by residents of Juliette, GA that visited the Capitol and shared details of the high level of coal ash toxins found in their drinking water wells located near Georgia Power’s Plant Scherer.

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*The **Georgia Water Coalition** is a consortium of more than 260 conservation and environmental organizations, hunting and fishing groups, businesses, and faith-based organizations that have been working to protect Georgia’s water since 2002. www.gawater.org*